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9/11, 20 YEARS LATER: LEGACIES AND LESSONS

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PARTICIPANTS:

Keynote Conversation: Security, Diplomacy, And The Future Of Afghanistan

JOHN R. ALLEN
President, The Brookings Institution

AMBASSADOR RYAN CROCKER
Former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan (2011-2012), Iraq (2007-2009),
Pakistan, Syria, Kuwait, and Lebanon

MODERATOR: SUSAN GLASSER
Staff Writer, The New Yorker

Panel 1: Lessons For The U.S. Government And Counterterrorism

MODERATOR: ELAINE KAMARCK
Senior Fellow and Founding Director, Center for Effective Public Management
The Brookings Institution

BENJAMIN WITTES
Editor-in-Chief, Lawfare
Senior Fellow, Governance Studies, The Brookings Institution

JULIETTE KAYYEM
National Security Analyst, CNN
Belfer Senior Lecturer in International Security, Harvard Kennedy School

RASHAWN RAY
David M. Rubenstein Fellow, Governance Studies
The Brookings Institution

DANIEL BYMAN
Senior Fellow, Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

Panel 2: Lessons For U.S. Foreign Policy And America's Role In The World

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 600
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

MODERATOR: MICHAEL E. O'HANLON
Senior Fellow and Director of Research, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

MADIHA AFZAL
David M. Rubenstein Fellow, Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

JANE HORTON
Former Senior Advisor, Office of the Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
Former Congressional and Military Liaison,
Embassy of Afghanistan, Washington, D.C.

THE HON. WILL HURD
Former Member (R-Texas) – U.S. House of Representatives

FARAH PANDITH
Former U.S. Special Representative to Muslim Communities
U.S. Department of State
Senior Fellow, Harvard Kennedy School
Adjunct Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations
Author - "How We Win"

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. ALLEN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is John R. Allen. I'm the president of the Brookings Institution. And it is a great pleasure to welcome you all today to a Brookings event, "9/11, 20 years later: Legacies and lessons."

It's a somber day and it goes without saying that 9/11 is one of the most significant but tragic days in recent American history. On that day, we lost 3,000 innocent souls to a heinous terrorist attack.

And like many, most of you watching today, I can tell you exactly where I was and my feelings as we watch the twin towers under attack, the Pentagon, and the crash of flight 93 in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. But it was clear to me that America was under attack and that we were ultimately going to war.

I was the deputy commandant at the time of the United States Naval Academy. And as I looked out across the faces of the young women and men of the 4,000 person midshipmen barrage, it was clear to me that in the months and potentially years to come, I would have the opportunity to serve with these young men and women. Serve with them in combat where I would promote some, I would decorate some and sadly, I would bury some.

Fast forward. The children who were infants, who were not even born on 9/11 are now entering college. They're entering the workforce where our policies had once been wrapped in the global war on terror. Those have evolved in recent years to something called the great power competition.

In emerging technologies in many ways have gripped the emergence of geopolitics. At home today, we're facing the realities of a global lethal pandemic. Issues of race and the effects of climate change as evidenced recently by the recovery from Hurricane Ida.

It would be folly not to see that that faithful day has shaped and framed our domestic and foreign policies in extraordinary ways. No one decision delivered us to where we are today. It was many decisions over a period of 20 years and the ensuing wars in Iraq

and Afghanistan.

Four different administrations, Republican and Democratic administrations all were at work. All had influence over where we find ourselves today. So it's important that the Brookings Institution and others like us take the time in this real moment of opportunity for the United States to reflect on what we have learned and then consider this an inflection point for what we can apply to the future.

So we have a wonderful program for you today. And in particular, two keynote speakers at the beginning will be joining me very shortly. The first is Ambassador Ryan Crocker who I count to be a very dear friend who served 37 years in our foreign service.

And I have to say that the American foreign service that organization which in so many ways fulfills the image of America in our foreign policy, is a very powerful organization. And I count Ryan Crocker to be one of our finest living diplomats.

He has served as an ambassador in Iraq where we first served together in Pakistan and Syria, in Kuwait. He would be our first ambassador in the aftermath of our response to the Taliban attack and the Al-Qaida attack on 9/11.

And would later be recalled to active service in the foreign service by President Obama to be our ambassador in Afghanistan again in 2011 where we would serve once again. And I'll also mentioned that Ryan was in the American embassy in Lebanon, in Beirut in April of 1983 when that building and our mission was devastated by a suicide bomber.

Ryan is no stranger to the realities of the world that we have lived in and he has led us from the front in so many ways. And it is an honor, Ryan, once again to share the stage with you.

We're also joined by another dear friend of Brookings Institution and a personal friend as well. And this is a very distinguished journalist, Susan Glasser, Staff Writer for The New Yorker. Susan writes a weekly column on life in Washington, D.C. But before moving over to the New Yorker, she was a leader and an editor in Washington

publications including Politico Magazine and Foreign Policy. Susan, it's a great pleasure and an honor for you to join us as well today. We are so honored to have you with us.

So, after Ryan and Susan, I have the opportunity to finish our keynote conversation. I'll be honored to turn the floor over to Brookings Senior Fellow Dr. Elaine Kamarck, who will moderate the first of two panels.

Just a brief reminder, ladies and gentlemen, we're streaming live and we're very much on the record. And throughout the events, the audience should feel free to submit questions via email at events@brookings.edu or via Twitter at #Sept11Lessons. So with that, Susan, let me turn the floor over to you and thank you again for joining us, please.

MS. GLASSER: Well, I want to thank you, sir. It's a great honor to be with you and Ambassador Crocker today and Brookings and everyone whose tuning in to think about and to take stock of 20 years, which seems both like an enormous amount of time and a very, very short amount of time at the same time. Or perhaps, it's merely just aging me and all of us so that might be one way to look at it.

You know, reflecting on the question in a way of whether it is appropriate now to be drawing sweeping historical lessons from 9/11 or perhaps, you know, channeling the Chinese to Henry Kissinger. It's too soon to tell. And I think that is a good starting point for our conversation this morning.

Both you and Ambassador Crocker as you said served together and really have a unique personal bond. I think that when you work together in Iraq that stands for in a way the two legs of the American response overseas to the events of 9/11, the diplomatic and the military.

And so, I'd like to start with both of you. Ambassador Crocker, maybe you can get us going this morning both with a sense of what your thoughts and expectations were as you saw those towers fell on 9/11 itself. Both personal and immediately foreign policy. There were some things that we all got right away and some things that we all got very, very wrong. I'm just hoping you can start us by locating us in time.

MR. CROCKER: Thanks, Susan. And thank you, John, for inviting me to

participate in a really significant program. So I'll do the parts that went right. Anything that I was involved in, of course, had that outcome.

I would just say looking back at these 20 years, I got an almost a ringside view of the attack flying into LaGuardia that morning for conversations with the Russian Perm. Rep, Sergey Lavrov, not on Afghanistan but on Iraq. And I was stuck on the Queensboro Bridge when both towers went down.

Rented a car from Avis, and in that long drive back to D.C. that day, two things went through my mind. The first was that I now understood why Northern Alliance Commander, Ahmad Shah Massoud, had been killed two days before by an al-Qaida suicide team in a fairly elaborate operation. I didn't understand why.

After the terrorism went down, I got it. Al-Qaida had staged that attack on us and they knew that we would respond, and they wanted to take the most important adversary commander off the field and of course they did.

The second reflection I had, and again in the arcane tribal world of the State Department, Afghanistan is not part of my bureau, the Near East Bureau; it's part of the South Asian Bureau. But I had this realization that my life was going to change very dramatically in ways that I couldn't possibly predict but that it would change, and it certainly did just that.

I was sent out to at the beginning of 2002 to reopen our embassy in Kabul.

MS. GLASSER: Well, you know, I'm glad you started with that. I actually was there in Kabul when you reopened the embassy and I remember it as a real moment. As a young war correspondent actually in Moscow, I was also speaking with the Russians at the moment when the towers were hit. And I was deep inside the bowels of the Russian Defense Ministry, General Allen, which was a very weird place to be.

And the one and only time in my life I was in the Russian Defense Ministry where a high-level Pentagon delegation was meeting to discuss the top priority at the time which of the Bush administration were two things, was missile defense and nuclear arms talks which seemed even then as possibly a relic of a different era and almost a resurrection

of a Cold War mindset.

And I think my first and overriding impression as well, Ambassador Crocker, was that the world was going to change, and that missile defense was not going to be the top priority anymore. It did, however, take us a couple of days to actually look at our maps and to realize that Moscow is very, very close to Central Asia. So after two days of watching TV, finally my husband, Peter Racker and I figured out that we were actually going to be sent into the war zone because this Moscow correspondence were the people who were closest as it turned out to the fight.

General Allen, sir, you understood right away perhaps that you and your students at the Naval Academy were going to be thrown into this. But let's take a step, you know, bigger. You know, what was the most unexpected thing where the part of our understanding that really defined where we've ended up 20 years later.

Obviously, militarily you were probably pretty confident that the Taliban who had hosted Al-Qaida was not a formable military threat. I'm guessing that you didn't think they would be back in control of Afghanistan in two decades. But, you know, what of your expectations were upended as you look back 20 years ago?

MR. ALLEN: Well, Susan, again thank you for joining us and it's always wonderful to be with Ryan in any virtual or physical form so it's great to be with you both.

I think the challenge for me, and you touched on it, Susan, was that so many of our preconceived notions at that particular moment about the trajectory of the U.S. defense policy and foreign policy were really upended in many ways. And I think that the reality of the U.S. operations in Afghanistan and then later in Iraq just showed us how much we had to learn about counterinsurgency operations, counterterrorism. How to conduct broad-based theater operations. And to do so in a part of the world we just had not anticipated having to conduct these kinds of operations.

You know, the United States does high tempo firepower intensive operations. We actually do that very well. But the thing that we learned wasn't that the high tempo firepower maneuver-based operations was going to be decisive. What we learned

was our capacity to stabilize the situation in the aftermath. Our capacity to understand the cultures, to understand the inherent underlying causes of whatever the challenge might be, whether it was on the ground in Afghanistan or whether it was the aftermath of the decisive operations against Saddam and the emergency of the Fedayeen Saddam and the insurgencies.

We really didn't understand that because the United States, first, had not been on the ground in those areas in Afghanistan ever really. And in the Persian Gulf region, in the Middle East, we had not been there for many, many years. So while we had the capacity to fight, the decisive military operations one of the most important dimensions of conflict was understanding how to stabilize the aftermath. And ultimately, shake that aftermath to our benefit. And that's the challenge that we have. That's in some respects why this war went on and on and on.

And that's also one of the reasons that -- and Ryan will remember -- one of the reasons where in some respects we were also quite successful. Where we understood the tribes. Where we understood the inherent causal factors for why an insurgency might be breaking out and how to solve those long before you had to fight to get out.

So we're very good at this business of decisive operations. It is in what we call Phase Four, the follow-on phases where we have to stabilize the population, remove corruption, deal with the issues associated with culture or faith or colonial legacy. That has been the challenge for us in those two wars and more broadly in our foreign policy around the world.

And then one final point. Look, when we came out of 9/11, the United States was gripped with the reality that we believed of terrorism. And so, much of how we shaped our foreign policy and how much we shaped our defense policy was based on this thing called the global war on terrorism, which is a behavior in many respects. It's not a strategy.

And 20 years along what we have learned is we took our eye of the Chinese. And we took our eye off of other forces at work in the world distracted by these

conflicts. Where had we had the opportunity to concentrate on East Asia and in other areas of the world, the outcome might have been quite different frankly.

MS. GLASSER: Ambassador Crocker, we're going to be living with the after-action reports and the lessons learned from Afghanistan and Iraq for many years and generations to come, I'm sure.

In the aftermath of Vietnam, there was a lot of this as well. And in part, an assessment as well of our institutions. And you could argue that one of the big takeaways in Washington had to do with an understanding that speaking truth to power was not wired into the foreign service, the military in ways that had ill served the country and the public in the Vietnam era.

I'm wondering what you think an equivalent lesson will be? Or even if actually it is the same old lesson about speaking truth to power. Certainly, when we talk about Afghanistan and the events that we've seen play out over the last few weeks in the American withdrawal, there is a real question about whether if everyone knew the war wasn't winnable? Why we kept doing the same thing over and over again and hoping for different results?

MR. CROCKER: Great question, Susan, and it's got a lot of dimensions to it. Let me start with your kind of your last sentence there.

Winning the war. Not in Iraq and not in Afghanistan. I did not use words like that. I didn't use victory or win because they didn't really apply. Pretty clear, I think in both countries, and of course I was ambassador to both. That these were challenges and problems that were going to have to be managed for the sake of our national security. But the notion of a win, it just wasn't there. It was never an option.

What I did find again in both Iraq and Afghanistan was that the power residing in Washington was quite ready to hear what I would deliver as my best assessment of the situation on the ground even when it was pretty negative. I remember my first DTC was (inaudible) eye on the Bagdad end and President Bush presiding over a National Security Council meeting and I delivered my assessment of Iraq's National Unity

Government that it was in no way national. It was completely disunified and it met no known definition of government that I was aware of.

The President took all that aboard. The next time we met virtually, he had yet a nickname for me. Sunshine. What do you got for me today, Sunshine? Now, again, timing is everything. This was the last two years of the administration. The surge was his last best hope and that I think provided not just a latitude for a frank appraisal but a necessity for it.

And then with the great John Allen in Afghanistan really it was the same thing. Now, again, that was a time of another surge. We were up to about 100,000 -- or we had about 100,000 troops when I left in 2012. And again, it was reflective of the now President Obama's desire to get this situation to a manageable point and then draw it down, which of course over the years ahead we did.

So I think there was a lot of grasping for trying out different alternatives in Afghanistan. And I was present at the creation, if you will, when I opened the embassy and came back almost a decade later as an ambassador.

There was no confusion in my mind, why we were in Afghanistan. We were there because of 9/11. And to drive that point home six months after 9/11, we commemorated the placement of the piece of the World Trade Center at the embassy flagpole.

Clear that this was going to be a long haul. Even to me even then and that we would have to be ready for that long haul. And that is where the problem kicks in. As John just said so well. Well, we can do the operational part. We can do it quickly. We can do effectively. We can take any opponent off the table for the moment. What we're less good at, again, John sketched that out is what kind of environment are we then operating in? What are our adversaries thinking? And what should we do about it?

And here, again, it's -- I think the crucial point. It didn't start in Iraq. It didn't start in Afghanistan. It's been out there for a while. You know, we are the greatest people on earth. I do believe that. We have our shortcomings and one of them is patience. We're

just not used to things that take a long time or problems that have to be managed and not solved.

And I think that's what we ran into both in Iraq and now as we see with Afghanistan. The degree at which the Taliban is now embolden and the narrative they now have that they defeated the infidel clad only in the armor of Islam that's going to resonate for a long time. That's going to do us a lot of damage. Yet we set it up. We just didn't want to be there anymore.

It's not that we were defeated. Goodness knows. We were just tired. Tired of the drain. Tired of the strain. The President didn't want to think about it anymore. And we pulled out with the immediate consequences we're seeing right now. But that's the crux of it. Our allies have learned to -- through our experience that we don't have strategic patience and our adversaries have learned to count on it.

It was years ago that that incomparable phrase came -- has surfaced attributable to the Taliban. You, Americans, have the watches, we have the time. And it just shown up.

MS. GLASSER: Can I ask both of you because I think it is one of the most persistent narratives to have come out of this period of time is the view that the original sin, if you will, was not so much going into Afghanistan after 9/11 as it was the Bush administration's turn to Iraq and turning away from finishing something that was broadly supported both inside the United States and around the world.

Do you both having been on the ground in both countries, do you share that view, Ambassador Crocker?

MR. CROCKER: I'm not sure I do, Susan. Again, the sense that we could have or should have finished things off immediately or quickly in Afghanistan and then got distracted by Iraq. You know, we weren't going to finish anything in Afghanistan.

We had a problem that this country had been used to launch attacks on the homeland. We had to mitigate that. We had to manage it. We had to do everything we could to ensure that never again from Afghanistan soil would there be an attack on the U.S.

So I find it a little bit of a false argument. If we were distracted what were the consequences? That we should have had more troops? Less troops? What is it exactly that we didn't get done that we could have or should have? And again, at least in my mind, there was never the prospect of a victory, of a clean win. It just doesn't work that way.

So somebody would need to tell me what it is we didn't do or didn't do right in Afghanistan as a consequence of the administration focusing on other priorities?

MS. GLASSER: General Allen, let me ask you one question and then a few more. But I'm interested in your perspective as someone who actually fought in both Iraq and Afghanistan, whether Iraq was the original sin of this global war on terror?

MR. ALLEN: Well, I think the question is being asked now. Was the invasion of Iraq necessary? And I actually was asked a question. The massive hypothetical question is if 9/11 had never happened would the United States have ever invaded Iraq? That's the hypothetical question of the century.

And I don't think that we can answer that question with certainty. I think it would have been a very different conflict if 9/11 had never happened.

But to Ryan's point, Afghanistan was, in fact, the conflict that the United States chose to become engaged in because we had been attacked from that soil. And when I took command of the war, Ryan and I stood next to each other as I took command of the war and then he, of course, would lead so much of the American process and the allied process as well by his influence and the strength of his personality.

We were under pretty clear instructions for the President of the United States that we were beginning to transition this war. There were about 150,000 troops when you count everybody that was there from 50 nations. And President Obama made the right call that we should begin to transition this war and this -- in some respects, I think it's a false retrospective that as Osama bin Laden was killed, we should have ended the war.

Let me just tell you some reality here. When you have 150,000 troops and about that many civilians from 50 countries spread out across over 800 bases in Afghanistan transitioning anything is going to take years. And we had set ourselves in many respects to

both transition from us being in the lead for fighting to the Afghans moving into the lead and then shrinking our position.

So the decision was right and that is that we had to turn this war over to the Afghans eventually. The question then isn't whether the decision was right or wrong. It was how ultimately it was implemented. And that of course at the very end the Pell Mell departure of course ended up with us today as we look at 9/11 tomorrow, 20 years on. In some cases, the very same Taliban leaders sitting in the palace in Kabul with some, frankly, pretty formidable and pretty frightening help from people out of the Haqqani network and other entities as well.

So Iraq, I think was, in fact, a distraction. Iraq did in fact take resources that probably could have gone to Afghanistan with better effect. We also saw that we took our eyes off of China, I think, in many respects as it became more prominent in its rise.

But I do applaud the decision that was made at about the 10-year point to begin the transition at war. It was a very clear campaign that was set in purpose. In fact, Ryan and I in the oval office were given the instruction by the President of United States. Transition the war. And we did that and that was the intent.

It wasn't because Osama bin Laden was killed. It was because the sense was it was time. We had accomplished our objectives with respect to sustaining a government in the palace and had diminished Al-Qaida that we could begin to transition that for the long term over into the hands of the Afghans. That was the right decision. Whether it was implemented properly or not I'm not going to second guess subsequent commanders and ambassadors, but the final decision to pull the plug and then decide and then proclaim that our mission was complete. We needed to come out. Well, look who's in the palace today. And I'm very concerned about this platform of terror becoming reinvigorated as a direct result of the Taliban being in the palace.

MS. GLASSER: So I want to talk about that before we finish up. But first, I want to ask you, General Allen, what level of soul searching you believe is required on the part of the military in its role in this?

We have three straight American presidents. Very different people, obviously. Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden, but all of them have expressed varying degrees of frustration with the generals and the advice that they had received. The sense that, you know, there was a military force pushing on them and pushing on them to continue with the fight and not to offer different outcomes.

Do you think that's a just critique? What is your own view about the level of responsibility that the military itself has for this becoming America's longest war?

MR. ALLEN: Well, again, I think -- I want to be very careful about second guessing commanders who were operating with the best information that they had at a particular moment in a political environment that was not of their making. And offering what's known as best military advice to the leadership.

But I think in general, the long recommendations that were made to multiple administrations was that some American presence, some allied presence, in fact, at a low level for a long period of time could provide, if you will, the security sustainability to give the Afghans the time to build their capacity so that they could ultimately own the security.

The idea of going to zero in a precipitous way ends up looking very much like what just happened in the end of August. And as I understood the commanders and of course no one consulted with me on this. But as I understood the commanders' views on this matter, their recommendations was that a low level American advisory presence. And this was sort of an obligation that we had made to the Afghans for many years. The moral presence of American and allied troops is an enormous source of support in the minds of the Afghans.

That some of modicum presence over a period of time was the right way to do this. Trailing off at some point in the future to a small force or zero force. Ryan uses when he says, we don't use the word victory or win. That's exactly correct.

And I can remember one of the first press conferences we had in Kabul. I got the question when are you going to win this? When are you going to have victory? And the answer is there is no such thing as a win or a victory in this kind of world.

What you want to try to do if foreign forces have intervened is to set up the indigenous population through cultivation of civil society, et cetera. Ryan was magnificent in that especially with women in Afghanistan. And then the security sense to create the capacity of that country ultimately to be, if you will, the prevailing mechanism in the struggle.

So I use the word prevail. And the intent was over time to give the Afghans the capacity to prevail. And that would mean security. That would mean an inclusive economy and it would mean a government that Afghans would support. But coming out too fast undercut, in the end, it undercut the confidence that Afghan forces had in themselves. Certainly, their confidence that the Americans would stay for the long haul.

And I would just remind people. How long have we had forces in Kosovo? How long have we had forces on the Sinai Peninsula? I mean generations. How long have 25,000 troops been on the South Korean Peninsula? Seventy years.

And we could have made the case at some point that we were going to come off that peninsula. Or we were going to come out of Japan. Or we were going to come out Europe. But the long term sustained American presence which was a moral presence as well as a security presence gave those countries the capacity to both stabilize themselves, to create a functioning economy and ultimately a government that was recognizable as inclusive. We might call it democratic or not but a government that was inclusive and ultimately fulfilled the voice of the people.

And that requires a long-term commitment. It doesn't require thousands and thousands and thousands of troops. But it requires the moral long-term commitment. And when the sense was recently that we were out. And that sense began in February of 2020 with the separate peace cut by the previous administration with the Taliban.

That began to unravel the confidence that this was -- that we were staying for the long haul. And I think that's the problem.

MS. GLASSER: So, Ambassador Crocker, looking at the world as it is not necessarily as we would want it to be. General Allen suggested one potential impact of the Taliban's takeover which is the potential for Afghanistan to be a renewed platform for terror.

What are some other geopolitical impacts that you see of President Biden's decision and the way it was carried out in the last few weeks?

MR. CROCKER: We go back to that hackney phrase, what happens in Afghanistan doesn't stay in Afghanistan. Originally in the context of 9/11 but very much, I think, applicable today.

Because what we're already seeing, I think was the Taliban narrative of the faithful defeating the infidel with their only real weapon, the strength of their faith. Well, that's going to resonate far outside of Afghanistan. And I think we're going to see Pakistan in particular facing an even graver security problem than they already have with Islamic militancy.

Pakistan Taliban -- and they aim at the overthrow of the government in Islamabad not in Kabul. Definitely invigorated by this as our movements everywhere I think around the world where any place where there is a tendency towards Islamic radicalism. Well, that tendency just got a big booster shot. So we, our allies and even our adversaries, I think will be contending with the aftermath of this very flawed decision for years to come. And it's not going to be to our advantage.

The lack of forethought that I think went into this, what the long-term consequences would be is something that we're going to pay for and our children are going to pay for it and their children's are going to pay for it.

We have empowered exactly the types of forces we were so focused on and committed to neutralizing. It's gone the other way. Again, inflicted on us, if you will, by us.

MR. ALLEN: Ryan, thank you very much. Susan, I can't thank you enough as well for joining us today. This is the beginning of three events. This is the first.

And I think that we all -- the three of us together had the opportunity to set the conditions for a very full conversation and two follow-on panels. So again, I can't thank you enough for joining us today.

It's a somber day. It's a day of reflection. I also believe it is a day of inflection for the United States. And I hope we can grasp this moment.

Let me, if I may, now turn the floor over to our Brookings Senior Fellow Dr. Elaine Kamarck who is the founding director of the Center for Effective Public Management. And Elaine will be moderating the first of our next two panels, lessons for the U.S. government and counterterrorism. Elaine, the floor is yours.

MS. KAMARCK: Thank you. Thank you, John. Thank you everyone. And welcomed to our first panel. Today, let's see am I on here? Start my video. All right, let's start this again.

Hello, everyone. Here we are. Thank you, John and thank to everyone who was the first very interesting panel. Today, we've assembled a great group of experts to look at the legacy of 9/11 and the implications for the U.S. government and counterterrorism. Before I introduce the panel, let me remind our listeners that questions can be sent to events@brookings.edu and via Twitter at #Sept11Lessons.

Let me start by going back to something that General Allen said in his introduction. So many of our preconceived notions about defense and foreign policy were upended by 9/11. Well, I think in this panel, we can expand that statement even further and say, so many of our preconceived notions about our homeland and about the security of our homeland were upended by 9/11.

It was a dramatic, dramatic awakening because all of a sudden foreign policy was on our shores. It wasn't something that was far away that could be taken care of by someone else. All of a sudden foreign policy was part of what the cop on the beat did as well as the CIA analysts and the soldiers serving abroad.

So let me start this conversation. Let me briefly introduce everyone. The fuller bios are on the event page, but just to highlight, we've got Ben Wittes, my pal here at Brookings and colleague. He is the senior fellow in Governance Studies at Brookings. And most importantly, he is the co-founder and editor-in-chief of Lawfare, which many of you know as one of the most important go-to places in the country for serious discussions of national security choices.

His most recent book with Susan Hennessey is "Unmaking the Presidency:

Donald Trump's War on The World's Most Prolific Office." And before than Ben was at the Washington Post specializing in legal issues.

Juliette, my former colleague at the Kennedy School. Hello, Juliette.

MS. KAYYEM: Hello.

MS. KAMARCK: Is a leading expert on homeland security. She served as assistant secretary for the Department of Homeland Security under President Obama and as the first under Secretary for Homeland Security for the State of Massachusetts.

She has written prolifically on this topic. She's the offer with Phil Heymann of a book called "Preserving Liberty in an Age of Terror," which can't be more appropriate to this discussion. And last but not least, she's the mother of three and a few years back, she coined the term "security moms," writing a book called "Security Mom: My Life Protecting the Home and Homeland."

Next go to my colleague, Rashawn Ray, he's a David Rubenstein Fellow here at Brookings and professor of sociology and executive director of the Lab for Applied Social Science Research at the University of Maryland College Park. One, he's one of the editors of Contact Magazine: Sociology for the Public.

He writes regularly about those things that maintain social and racial inequality and one of his most recent books is "How Families Matter: Simply Complicated Intersections of Race, Gender and Work" with Pamela Jackson.

And last but not least, Dan Byman, professor at the Georgetown School of Foreign Service and a senior fellow here at Brookings at the Center for Middle East Policy. Dan is an expert on counterterrorism as is evident in his two most recent books.

One is "Road Warriors: Foreign Fighters in the Armies of Jihad" and "Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement." Dan has also worked on the joint 9/11 inquiry and on the U.S. House and Senate Intelligence Committees.

So as you see, as is typical of Brookings scholars, we are all scholars, but we are also experienced in government and in workings of government. I worked in the Clinton White House for four years doing Reinventing Government. And also, have written

on this topic from time to time as it impacts the operations of the presidency.

So I'm going to start by giving a question to each person on the panel and then we're going to have one final question and go to audience participation.

Ben, let's start with you. In one day, the 9/11 attacks collapsed the neat lines that had always differentiated the domestic policing and law and order from the international world of national security and intelligence. Over the past 20 years, what have been the big legal challenges we've faced and how have we done?

MR. WITTES: That's a huge question and --

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah, and you've got four minutes to do it.

MR. WITTES: Yeah. I'm going to I think not take all those four minutes. I will just say, there have been -- so at a basic level, this caused massive changes to the legal system. Some of them very overt like the creation of entire new cabinet departments and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, right? And some of them much subtler like new rules for surveillance activities that most people actually don't understand and operate very subtly.

At the most fundamental level, the big shift was the movement of counterterrorism which had always had an element of military authority involved in it and an element of covert action decisively from the domestic law enforcement basket of authorities into the foreign affairs basket of authorities. And specifically, the military and code of action basket of authorities.

This had huge implications for our ability to detain large numbers of foreign fighters. Mostly reasonably, but in many cases inaccurately. It also had huge implications for our ability to use lethal force overseas to kill rather than to arrest and prosecute suspected terrorists.

How have we done? Look, the fundamental commitment was to allow a democratic society to retain its character as a democratic liberal society and wage war against terrorists at the same time. In that we did quite well. I think there is -- it is a remarkable fact that we in the last year deposed a president by electoral means. So we still

require -- have our sort of fundamental democratic character intact and we have not had a significant overseas based terrorist attack in the United States since 9/11. That is a tremendous accomplishment.

We made grotesque errors along the way. We injured people. We did things we should not have done, but I do think it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the fundamental commitment was kept in a way that I think was honorable and successful notwithstanding the current quite reasonable browbeating we're engaged in over Afghanistan.

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah, great. Well, let me bring Juliette into the conversation.

MS. KAYYEM: Yeah.

MS. KAMARCK: Look, it didn't take long after the attacks for Americans to begin to wonder, how on earth we could preserve our civil liberties while enhancing our national security?

MS. KAYYEM: Yeah.

MS. KAMARCK: Or as your book is so aptly titled, *Preserving Liberty in an Age of Terror*. Have we managed to do this as the terrorist's threat has evolved from overseas and foreign terrorists to homegrown terrorists?

MS. KAYYEM: Yeah. Well, thank you first of all Brookings and Elaine for having me here. And it's great to see so many people. And I just want to reiterate what Ben said too. I had been in counterterrorism since 1995, and I had served on the National Commission on Terrorism, which was one of the commissions that warned about Al-Qaida.

If you had told me on September 11 that there would be no massive attack or even 50 guys showing up in 50 suburban shopping malls and blowing themselves up, and you said that wasn't going to happen, I would have said, yeah, dream on. And clearly, there is going to be a second, third, fourth wave. And so, we can't forget that even though of all the damage that has been done.

So, you know, the way that Phil and I have been thinking about it. And I

think a lot about it now in terms of the white supremacy threat and other threats which I'll end with at the end of this. Is we -- the public discourse tends to be either/or, right? Extraordinary powers or not.

And so, one of the ways we want it -- I'm lawyer by training -- for people to think about it is if you're going to grant those extraordinary authorities, extraordinary in the sense of, you know, whatever it is, right? Whether it's interrogation or the famous ticking time bomb. This is what Chaney did to sell the Iraq war.

If even if we're going to grant you that authority, what kind of standards would you want on it? And I think what you've seen over the course of 20 years is a little bit more sophistication than we saw in those early days. In particular, you know, what kind of oversight do you want, right? What kind of disclosure are you going to require to the government? These are the questions that we should be asking now, right?

So it isn't do you want government to have that authority? If it's granted, what kind of conditions do you want on it? Who has the authority? Who has the right to oversee it? Is it legislated or through a covert action? Does it have a sunset provision, which I think is actually a real successful thing in homeland security. The Patriot Act has sunset provisions.

One of the reasons why I say that is because in the politics of homeland security, it is really hard domestically to say the threat has ended, right? I mean it's just -- yeah, the threat is there, right? It's just, have you minimized it or not? So if you have a ratcheting down function already built into the law or the regulation, it actually relieves that political stress. The Patriot Act had some sunset provisions. So does, interestingly enough, the famous color code system. It doesn't exist anymore.

But when the U.S. government actually now has an advisory alert that ratchets down automatically so you're not having the Secretary of Homeland Security try to, you know, tell people, well, there's always a threat. Of course, there's always a threat, right? And then ratchet down.

So I think really thinking about ways in which what we might call

extraordinary powers because our constitution does not have any concept of martial law or an honor switch. Ways to think about how you regulate those powers.

As for the white supremacy issue, you know, I am not a fan of a domestic terrorism law just because I don't think Biden is going to be president forever given my politics. And I think, one, I think democrats pushing for that should be thinking about not just the consequences. But what are they not able to do under existing law?

The Boston Marathon Bombers were prosecuted under good old fashion law. And in some ways criminal law, in some ways having to find an intent factor can be pretty inhibiting, right? All you have to show for January 6 is, right, they did something bad and we're putting them away for some period of time.

As a counterterrorism effort, it's the prosecution and then the eventual jail time that serves as an anti-recruitment tool because that's all we have to be thinking about now. How can we de-platform its leader, Trump. How can we prosecute these -- what you might want to call terrorists but people who fundamentally just committed crimes?

So I do think that we have sufficient tools and I do think without public security being hindered by its fear that it is going to enter the third rail of politics by going after white supremacists, you're probably going to see a lot more activity.

If I could just end on one quick thing on homeland security. I was listening in on Ambassador Crocker and Allen and really appreciate their viewpoints. From the perspective of homeland security and counterterrorism, I don't think you can say that Iraq did not have an impact on what is happening. I mean, I just don't think because we heard one viewpoint.

So I just want to be clear here that from the perspective of what happened both the radicalization that occurred because of the war, the changing of the resources and the disunity that the Iraq war bred in American society fundamentally changed the post-9/11 apparatus. And so, it just was important to me.

Iraq seems to be forgotten in our 20 years later. So for those of us who been around a long time, it really is -- it was a significant shift. It was a -- the war on terror to

me ended December 2001 when President Bush asked for the first military planning for an invasion of Iraq. Then you just saw the shift.

MS. KAMARCK: Very interesting. Thank you so much.

Rashawn, 9/11 changed so many things including -- and this is often overlooked in our discussions, domestic law enforcement, basic policing in the U.S. And leading to the militarization of the U.S. police force. Talk to us about this legacy in domestic law enforcement and did it go too far?

MR. RAY: On the last point, yes, I think it did go too far. I mean, look, we know that trillions of dollars have been spent in Afghanistan and the Middle East over the past 20 years. And one big thing that people always wonder is with all of the equipment and all of the supplies and the accessories that are purchased what happens to them?

Well, in some cases they are destroyed. In some cases, they're left behind. But one big thing that is done with them is they are brought back home. And through a couple of federal programs including the 1033 program as well as the 1122 program those programs allow for law enforcement to either acquire those military weapons and equipment either by simply paying shipping or they get a huge discount, which would essentially be the military discount for one of the other programs.

And to tell people the magnitude of this. There are a little over 18,000 or roughly about 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States. About 65 percent of them have participated in these programs. The 1033 program as well as the 1122 program. I mean purchasing things such as, you know, tactical armored vehicles, ammunition, weapons, and then other sorts of supplies.

Part of the ramifications of that obviously and we saw this simply when we think about what has happened as it relates to January 6 and even the 2020 protest that were happening not just in D.C. but around the country. We can even go back to Ferguson where people really started seeing tanks. Where people started seeing police officers looking as if they are literally in the Middle East. And it's not simply about what they look like or the weapons that they bring to bear, but also the change to the organizational culture of

policing.

And I think there are a few important points for people to know. First, we are allowing law enforcement about the warrior culture. The warrior versus the guardian culture. A lot of that didn't simply come because people in the military were going into law enforcement. It came about because the equipment suggested that there needed to be different tactics and different training applied to law enforcement for them to be able to use them.

And often times what we will see is those types of equipment and weapons coming out at times when people didn't necessarily think that they should be. This is one of the reasons why a lot of universities, the University of Maryland is one of them among a growing list that is divested from these particular programs, the 1033 and the 1122 program.

The other big thing that we have to think about, and it goes to bottom line, is whether or not the acquisition of this military equipment leads to people being safer. And unfortunately, it doesn't. Part of what happens is that police departments were more likely to have military equipment or more likely to kill civilians. Research also documents that departments with military equipment are less likely to prevent crime and local residents are less likely to feel safe.

So we see that this militarized police departments seem to ultimately harm the reputation of law enforcement. And then we know that obviously there are disproportionate effects by race where black people say compared to whites are more likely to have force used on them, more likely to be killed.

There has been a huge uptake in SWAT deployment which again when you see the way that SWAT is deployed at times, it literally looks as if we are at war with our local communities and there is one key staff there comes to bear in say, Breonna Taylor, which is the fact that black women are more likely to be killed in their homes by law enforcement.

Like these are some of the stats that have dire consequences. And then as Juliette was saying, we haven't even got to talking about the way that this militarism plays a

role in white nationalism in the United States and the uptake in the way that white supremacy is once again infiltrating law enforcement. This has huge ramifications for what's happening. And the bottom line is this.

The way that a lot of police officers are being trained today is to not view themselves as guardians of their community and as public safety advocates but as warriors. And in turn, they view the people in their local communities who they are sworn to protect as enemies. And that is the reason why the organizational culture as it relates to law enforcement has changes quite a bit.

I mean even in terms of perceptions of safety as well as who looks foreign. We know one thing as it relates to racial attitudes that before 9/11 people from the Middle East and even their own identification on the census, they were more likely to actually identify as white. Like they were like how should we identify? We're clearly not black. We're not Latino. That was how they identified.

After 9/11, we saw a big change in who looked foreign, the level of police surveillance, the level of stop and frisk practices have had a dire impact on law and order in the United States, public safety and the way people view policing.

MS. KAMARCK: Great. Thank you. Thank you so much, Rashawn. Interesting insights as always.

Finally, Dan. Are we safer today than we were? What have learned over the past 20 years about these foreign fighters and the movements that nurture them? Have we responded well? In what sense has U.S. counterterrorism policy failed or succeeded?

MR. BYMAN: So I would say we are safer, but at a pretty heavy cost. So let's just think of a basic question. And this goes back to an important point that Juliette made, which is if you recall the discussions we had at Brookings, but also really around the country after 9/11 and the tremendous fear and the expectation that there would be follow on attack, after follow on attack. And that 9/11 was the beginning not the high point.

If you go back and then you said to people then that 107 Americans would

die in the U.S. homeland from jihadist terrorism in the 20 years after 9/11 – obviously, that's 107 too many, though; those are innocent people – but that's far fewer than anyone expected. And, you know, while our panel is going on this morning, more Americans are going to die unnecessarily from COVID-19 than have died in these 20 years from jihadist terrorism, right?

So I think we need to have some perspective on the tremendous excess in terms of defending the homeland. And that has come from several factors. One was the disruption of the Afghanistan haven that al-Qaida enjoyed in Afghanistan. And Ben Wittes and I actually have a piece on this that just came out in Lawfare for those interested even more.

But there's a tendency to kind of look at Afghanistan now and say, what a disaster. And certainly, you know, disaster is part of the description. But there were also tremendous successes that were very important for counterterrorism and disrupting Al-Qaida's ability to build a mini army which it had done for years in Afghanistan and then launch attack after attack.

In addition, there is a global police and intelligence effort against a range of Jihadist that can severely diminish the terrorism threat. This doesn't show up in the headlines. It kind of was buried.

But Al-Qaida later the Islamic state and other groups did was they were able to draw on fighters from around the world. And they were able to fly below the radar screen for propaganda, for funding raising, for logistics, for all these things. But now, they're aggressively hunting. And often under the guidance of the United States.

Governments are cooperating together and it makes it far harder for them to pull off sophisticated attacks. It means when people travel, they are vulnerable rather than simply disappearing. And there's also more effective homeland defense.

Now, we can argue, and I think reasonably so, that many things have gone too far, but the homeland defense efforts have reduced the number of terrorist attacks and that's been a very important part of reducing the overall level of violence. But I will stress

the cost is considerable.

We've spent trillions of dollars on wars some of which like Iraq were unnecessary and counterproductive when it comes to counterterrorism. There's been thousands of Americans who have died fighting these wars, but in addition if you look at the Moslem world more broadly, there's a huge price paid where you have Jahid groups that are incredibly active.

So you are asking are we succeeding around the world? The answer is of course and very painfully no. That many groups are thriving, and many countries are in trouble. So when we think of success, I think I'm going to emphasize what's gone well, but also the heavy price paid not just by Americans but by many people around the world.

MS. KAMARCK: Great. Thank you. Thank you, Dan. I want to -- you brought up Afghanistan and what's been happening here. And I'd like to -- before we take audience questions, go quickly around. Maybe starting with you, Dan, and going backwards in the order and ask.

Look, we've just been through two pretty jarring weeks, right? Where we watched in horror as the exit from Afghanistan descended into chaos. For those of us old enough, it was eerily reminiscent of the departure from Saigon. And there were so many people killed, so many people left behind.

Should we have done better? And there's two pieces to this. There seems to be the general feeling that we should have gotten out of Afghanistan and should have ended the "endless war". And then there's the question of why did this exit go so badly if we knew that we were going to get out? If the President had said this early on in his administration. So what happened here? Do you have any explanation? Dan?

MR. BYMAN: So let me start with what I feel were some of the policy failures and then move onto the last clamorous few months.

So when we think of the early days of Afghanistan. It was seen as a tremendous success. So if we go back to 2003 and 2004, the Bush administration even used it in their campaign nets. And the Taliban was seen as defeated and there was no

sense that we might need to negotiate with the remnants of the Taliban and allow them to reintegrate into the political process because they were defeated.

There was optimism about the integrity of the Afghan government and its competence. And there was also optimism about the role of Pakistan. And all of that was wrong. Now, I was not writing in 2003 and 2004 and saying all of this was wrong so I don't want to throw stones at policymakers who made those mistakes. But over time this became more and more apparent. But it seemed like our policy was often on autopilot. Where we were continuing to make the same mistakes. We were continuing to make the same promises.

And the Taliban was steadily recovering as this was going on and there wasn't a dramatic course correction despite the flawed assumptions of U.S. policy. And what was particularly frustrating about the last few months is as you say, it was known that the United States was getting out and I, again, did not predict that the Afghan army and government would collapse in a matter of weeks. But that was certainly one of the many possibilities.

At times, armies can collapse, and the U.S. military historically is very good at contingency planning. So to not have had that planning for not just the best case that the Afghan government endures and the U.S. and its allies can leave at their convenience, but also the worst case was a surprise to me. And given the tremendous sacrifice of Americans but also given the tremendous sacrifice of many Afghans who worked with U.S. forces and U.S. officials, it's stomach turning to have watched what happened.

MS. KAMARCK: Ray?

MR. RAY: Yeah. I mean look I agree with Dan. I mean when we think about this, and I'll bring it home. Part of what happened after 9/11 is Americans were unified. All of the normal fissures that exist in the United States in the ways we know that our society and our country is inequitable. Slightly took a backseat more for thinking about patriotism. Thinking about American nationalism.

And part of that rallying around was about revenge. It was about getting

revenge on the people who did this. We go to Afghanistan. People support that. Of course, as everyone has talked about then it leads to Iraq, that leads to a host of things.

But the biggest ways and one of the ways to think about it is there were about what? Eight hundred thousand troops that have gone to Afghanistan and come back. I think about my godbrother, Thomas James, who was deployed six times to the Middle East. And part of what happened is, is as much as we were thinking about getting revenge. When we took out people along the way leading up to Osama bin Laden and others since then.

We never thought about as Dan was saying, those contingency plans or the fallout of what would happen to people back on the homelands such as with law enforcement, but also with the soldiers that went there to fight. Thinking about their medical bills. Thinking about their mental health. Thinking about their ability to get back to work. Unlike what happened, say, with New Deal policies following World War II where that helped to catapult what happened after that war, and helped to drive the economy. We didn't see that happening in the same with this particular war.

And I think some of these fallouts are things that -- and look, General Allen said it really good on the first panel, which is about organizational patience. That as the United States, we often times go in. We rush in. We do a job. We do a task similar to what happened with taking out Osama bin Laden. But then it's like, okay, what is the aftereffects of that? How do we stabilize a region? How do we think about what's happening here?

And the overall thing is some of those things were never the goal, but they turned into a problem that is seen as a nation. We're ill-prepared to address because we had a particular goal that was achieved and we didn't think about the indirect effects of the foreign policies that we were implementing at that time.

MS. KAMARCK: Juliette?

MS. KAYYEM: So I mean the Afghanistan is as I was saying in the previous answer seems to be overwhelming a discussion about Iraq right now. And I just think for people like me who solely -- you know, I'm not an expert on Afghanistan. But on

counterterrorism and homeland security, you just -- you cannot take that narrative out. So when I think about Afghanistan. I think about, you know, a turn in 2001 when the discussion began but certainly by 2003 from a just mission in Afghanistan, which was not a counterinsurgency mission nor a nation building mission. It was a counterterrorism mission. That was the just mission. That was revenge as Dr. Ray was saying.

Call it whatever you will. It was a legitimate use of force given what we had suffered. What remained in Afghanistan to be honest than became something different, right? It was, were we now going to focus our efforts on counterinsurgency and the famous COIN lingo and what did that mean? And was it really 100,000 troops and I mean, you know, the mission changed from its initial just mission.

And so, it's just hard -- so the ending, how I judge the ending is really hard for someone like me because, you know, I don't know why we were there after 2003, honestly. I mean it is -- it's really, I don't know why. I mean, I get it. We wanted a better just nation. We didn't get it 15 years later, 16 years later. Maybe the effort was worth it because the Afghanistan today is different than the Afghanistan of September 10, 2000. We don't know the signs from the Taliban were not fantastic right now.

But there is a generation of Afghans who have grown up better than they would have absent a more rigorous effort on our part. So I struggle with the last couple of weeks because as someone who didn't quite get what the heck was going on there once Iraq started? It is the ending seemed right and if not delayed. And one can debate how best it could have been done.

From the counterterrorism perspective, let me just talk about the future quickly. I think a lot of people are trying to scare a lot of people into, you know, we're back to September 10th and the Taliban flag is going to rise above the U.S. embassy and we're going to be, you know, we're back to where we started. That is absolutely not true. As Ben and Dan were both saying, the fundamental success of the counterterrorism mission was achieved relatively early.

You got rid of Al-Qaida and you built homeland security defenses within a

two- or three-year period. Those remain. And I think they're likely to remain. Is there still a threat? Is the threat bigger? Yes. Now than it was two or three weeks ago. There's a -- and I should add, and that threat will also apply to white supremacy groups in Europe and others who are going to use Afghanistan refugees as were seen here as a radicalizing force.

But is it the same? No. And the question now for the Biden administration and one I think they should get more specific about is whether the increase in the threat, which is clear because the Taliban -- we don't know their motivations with Al-Qaida. We don't know -- we know they're going to be stuck with Isis and that's a fight we don't want to be in the middle of, but we certainly will -- we certainly know their focus will be on that.

And the changes in our capabilities without having military in Afghanistan with the Biden administration or what we call, you know, over the-horizon capabilities which is a euphemism for drones essentially. What do in covert action? Can the gap be filled, right? The increase and the decrease because there's a -- I think yes. It will be harder, but I think one should be wary of those who would use what happened in Afghanistan as a sort of, you know, back to the future.

The world has changed significantly in 20 years from our homeland defenses to the motivations of the Taliban to our military and intelligence capabilities. And honestly, you know, my expert analysis to be determined, right? I mean we just sometimes we can't know these things.

MS. KAMARCK: Ben.

MR. WITTES: Yeah. So I want to foot stomp a point that I think all three of my concern-panelists have allude to. I just want to bring it into focus. There were two overlapping missions in Afghanistan. And one of them was a matter of near absolute political consensus in the United States, which was the military counterterrorism on offense in the aftermath of 9/11. I disagree a little bit with Juliette that this was done by 2003. I think there was a very important part of this mission that took place early in the Obama administration from Afghanistan as a base which involved about 3,000 drone strikes. Most of them in Pakistan which as Dan has documented really, really decimated Al-Qaida's

middle management. And so, I think you can say by 2011, 2012 this mission had kind of run its course.

The second mission which was not a matter of political consensus but which to be fair to the Bush administration, they were extremely candid about. And Donald Rumsfeld, the much-maligned Donald Rumsfeld, wrote an Op Ed in the Washington Post of the New York Times, I believe shortly after 9/11 that basically said, don't talk to me about exit strategies. We're here for long-term engagement.

And he was talking about this nation building stabilization of Afghanistan depriving the world of ungoverned spaces in which organizations like Al-Qaida could breed in the future. That mission was always controversial. You know, it was controversial in Iraq. It was controversial in Afghanistan.

I think we have seen the final failure of it, frankly, with the departure. I with Dan, do not want to pretend that I never had any sympathy with it because I did. I thought it was a viable hypothesis for a way to in the vernacular that has changed meaning over the years during the swamp. And we were wrong about that. And so, I do think that as that mission in 2012, 2013 as the counterterrorism on offense mission faded. And I do think it was about 10 years after Juliette thinks it was, but we can haggle about the first decade later.

I think we really brought to the floor the controversy about the second mission. And that has been the second decade of the war in Afghanistan. And it's the one that I think is very hard to argue that second hypothesis has been borne out. The first was a dramatic success.

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah. You know, this has been a terrific conversation and particularly the clarity that all of you brought between the first mission and the second mission. Both in terms of the domestic unification around the first one, but not around the second one.

It's time to go to audience questions so we don't have too much time. So I'm going to -- and we had a lot of great questions, by the way, come in from a very large

audience. And what I think I'm going to pick is I'm going to pick one from Marvin Kalb, a distinguished former colleague both at Brookings and at the Kennedy School.

Marvin writes in. He says, look, failure in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan seems to go back to a lack of local knowledge, right? A lack of weight given to local knowledge. We simply don't understand how to do this. Or in the previous conversation that General Allen and Ambassador Crocker had, they talked about how we didn't know how to stabilize the situation. We knew how to go in there and get the bad guys, but we didn't know how to stabilize.

Is there anything any of you could say that we could do as a nation or institutionalize as in institutions to correct this? Is there a corrective to the problem that we've confronted many times? Not just in Afghanistan but Afghanistan most recently? Dan, why don't we start with you?

MR. BYMAN: One of the dangers of being a professor is you tend to think a lot of things are solved by education. So one thing, I would certainly emphasize --

MS. KAMARCK: We could all share that, by the way.

MR. BYMAN: Yeah, exactly. I have a choir Zoom here. But I would emphasize that teaching people languages and foreign culture is vital for broader national security.

And if you look at Afghanistan that's a great example. Where the number of Americans who are in the U.S. government who speak Pashto or Dari, or other relevant languages is still strikingly small. The number of highly proficient Arabic speakers is still strikingly small. Even 20 years after 9/11 and, you know, America's perhaps unique historically where a well-educated person can only speak -- may only speak one language. And that's not something that was, you know, is true in other cultures and other times. So that's one thing I've emphasized society wide, which I think will benefit government.

And then the other thing I would say is there also needs to be a realistic sense of limits. And with that recognition that at times we need to reconcile with adversaries. And that's always painful when difficult when the adversary as in the case with

the Taliban is bad, right? And this is a really bad movement and organization. But to deny that they exist or deny their strength, to deny that they have genuine roots in Afghanistan society proved very costly for the United States.

MS. KAMARCK: Juliette?

MS. KAYYEM: Yeah. I mean, I think I completely agree with Dan on this. And I think the analogy of Vietnam and Afghanistan has gotten me. You know, the exit looked similar but the entry -- the analogy really is Vietnam and Iraq is sort of a mission to alter based on our image as compared to Afghanistan.

And so, I actually think and, you know, and I really appreciate what Ben has said and maybe I'll give the war another decade because he's absolutely right. But then, you know, by 2013 it was hard to say we knew what the mission was in Afghanistan and the different ways of it. So I actually think that what the military can learn.

A couple of things. One is the military can learn about, you know, if you can't define the mission at the beginning and what exit means, because I don't believe Rumsfeld. If you don't know the exit why the hell are you -- I mean, any person in a business school will tell you, what are my metrics, right? What are my standards for success? You couldn't get a public policy passed in your basic public policy school like mine unless you had criteria as Elaine certainly knows. You just drill it into the student's heads.

What's your criteria? When are you done, right? I mean that seems to me to be something that is part of the military training not so much sort of civilian training is. And I think in Afghanistan, we probably had a good sense of what that was in 2001. And I don't think that was necessarily true for other wars.

You know, back to the homeland though. I also want to say in terms of I think people have been asking me the last few weeks sort of like homeland security in 20 years? And I'm like, you know, do you have 20 years for an answer? But just quickly.

Homeland Security is not a monolithic thing either. The exits of 2001, the money spent on air conditioners and, you know, New Jersey garbage trucks which did happen under homeland security funds. You know, all that got corrected. So these things

can look really bad. I think of what Dr. Ray said about the militarization is true. And we have to begin to unleash that on I think these kinds of weaponry have to do to dedicated teams in major urban cities only, right? Only. And that they get deployed.

But the final thing is I want just people to end with sort of what 9/11 did do which is maybe right is it did expose our vulnerabilities also to other threats. Homeland security had a course correction in 2005 and that was with Hurricane Katrina when lots of people focus on stopping 19 guys from getting on four airplanes realized we could not save an American city from drowning.

And that course correction hopefully makes us better prepared, but certainly we're showing signs of stress right now for pandemics and climate change and all that and all these other threats.

MS. KAMARCK: Ray?

MR. RAY: Well, I completely agree with what's already been said. I mean I think one big thing is when there's one group that we haven't I think talked enough about. Those are the soldiers on the ground. And we listen to them, they are saying very similar things to what we are saying here.

It got to a point, particularly at the start of the Obama administration, but I guess particularly at the end of his first term where soldiers were saying, we don't know what we're here for. We don't know what we're fighting for. The only thing I feel as though I'm fighting for is the person beside me. And I think that speaks to what was happening on the ground. It speaks to fissures of relationships as Dan was saying, where there were people trying to build relationships. That was their job.

And then all of a sudden, a drone would drop, or they would be ordered to destroy something that had been built. So I think part of thinking about that is, of course, we went in with one goal and it shifted, and I think we never moved the bull's eye. It was never everyone that got onboard with what is the new goal and it lingered on. And again, I think that the comparison to Vietnam and other wars is spot on in terms of the legacy that we leave as we think about the title for this event today, lessons and legacies.

Part of the legacy is what has happened in those countries and importantly the perception that people in those countries have of Americans. And I think that is something that we really have to work through diplomatically in a way that isn't necessarily brute force to try to heal some of those issues that have had where people had a lot of faith in the United States. And then all of a sudden, they feel like we dropped the ball from underneath them and that doesn't just extend to people abroad but even to the soldiers that were on the ground during this long war.

MS. KAMARCK: Ben, final word and then we will go to the next panel.

MR. BYMAN: I think the -- look, I'm not a foreign policy specialist and how we -- when it is and isn't appropriate to have long-term military engagements in countries, we don't understand very well is a question that is kind of above my pay grade. And I don't know the answer to it. And I do think the one lesson of the last 20 years is a certain humility about what we can and can't accomplish.

And that sometimes the answer is cruder than we would like it to be. I would like the answer to have been invade Afghanistan, take out Al-Qaida, install a decent government that's not murderous that has the support of people and let 1,000 flowers of civil society bloom and take root.

That's what I want the answer to have been. And I think the answer in retrospect was more like. Go in. Kill the terrorists. Spend as much time as you need there to effectuate your counterterrorism mission as completely and effectively as you can. And then get out in heartless way that takes care of the people who you made specific commitments to.

And I don't want that to be the answer because that answer sucks. But I think the basic answer is probably closer to that than what we tried and what I would have advocated. And so, I think that sucks and that's, you know, the lesson is that life does not comport with my sense of morality and decency all that often.

MS. KAMARCK: And, Ben, that's a good note to end on because, you know, what you wished for is so very American, right? It is so much a part of us not only do

we wish for these things, but we actually think we can do them. And it's a sad day when we have to realize we can't.

Thank you everyone. To Ben, to Rashawn, to Juliette, to Daniel. I'm going to turn this now over to my colleague, Michael O'Hanlon, whom many of you know. One of the country's great experts on the military. Michael, your screen.

MR. O'HANLON: Elaine, thank you, and greetings, everyone. I'm Mike O'Hanlon in the Foreign Policy Program at Brookings and I have the distinct pleasure and privilege this morning of moderating a panel of outstanding scholars, activists, public servants, and people who have played a remarkable array of roles in our Nation's and the world's efforts to deal with extremism and violence and the problems in societies that are afflicted by those even more than our own over the last 20 years.

So I realize you see them perhaps in a different order on your screen than I may, but let me go in order with Jane Horton first.

Jane has been a special advisor to the Office of the Secretary of Defense. She is extremely active on many issues concerning the well-being of our men and women in uniform and she is herself the wife of a man killed in Afghanistan exactly a decade ago yesterday. And so we salute her service, her family's service, and we again extend our deepest sympathies as I know the 10-year anniversary has been on her mind. And she will speak at a personal level as well as at a policy level to this situation. But, again, her activism for Gold Star Families and many other groups is remarkable and inspiring. And, of course, the human side of what has been involved in the post-9/11 American and global experience is a big part of what we continue to want to discuss, even on this panel, which has its main focus on foreign policy. Yet we will link to the kinds of issues you heard in the previous discussions today, and also to very much the human side of things.

Will Hurd is a remarkable individual and friend of mine who was a CIA officer, spent time on the ground in Afghanistan covertly in the early years and accomplished great things. We just heard the first panel talk about how they all seem to agree that what happened early in Afghanistan was pretty good, even if they're not so happy about what

happened after. And Will is a part of those initial successes and an important part. He then chose to serve his country again and ran for Congress and won and served three terms in the 23rd district in the state of Texas as a Republican and assigned or sponsored and co-sponsored a multitude of different types of legislation. I think on an NPR segment, that you can Google and see, he was recognized as perhaps having been part of more legislation in three terms than many people are in ten or more. And so decided to serve his country in other ways after that and is now back home in Texas doing a range of things, including investment banking with an eye towards helping businesses and communities that are involved in some of the issues we're discussing this morning.

Madiha Afzal, if I were better with the alphabet, I would have introduced first if I were going by alphabetical order. She is my colleague at Brookings. She is a David Rubenstein fellow. She is Pakistani-American, went to the University of Lahore and also Yale University, wrote a remarkable and very readable and insightful book called "Pakistan Under Siege," and continues to do scholarship on her native country as well as other countries that face challenges of extremism, including Nigeria, another large country of some 200 million with a large Muslim population, but also a large Christian population. And she works on both those countries, as well as many other questions that I've had the privilege of writing about Afghanistan with her in recent months.

And, finally, Farah Pandith has been a special advisor to Muslim communities for the Department of State in the United States government for, I believe, three different presidents, and therefore reflects a lot of the aspects of what we have been trying to do and want to do and in some cases have achieved in American foreign policy since 9/11 — outreach to the Islamic world, bipartisanship at home where possible. She has been fighting these good fights, but also trying to lift our sights and our spirits and find more effective ways to cooperate in this agenda.

So what I'd like to do this morning is to first, starting with Jane, just ask for personal reflections. We've heard that from John Allen and Ryan Crocker already this morning. We've heard that kind of observation and reflection from panel one, but I think

particularly with this panel, we definitely want to pose that same question. Given how much the individuals here have really lived and breathed this — experienced this tragedy, this problem for the United States, but also problem for the world and the region of South Asia and the broader Middle East. And then we'll get to some more policy questions about American foreign policy going forward.

I'm just going to add one more point before turning the floor to Jane, which is that I want to thank you all for your questions. And you can still submit by email at Events@Brookings.edu. But we've read a lot of your questions already and a lot of them concerned Afghanistan. A lot of panel one wound up being about Afghanistan, even though they were supposed to be talking about domestic policy. But I'm not teasing them or criticizing them so much as observing that Afghanistan is of course both foreign policy and domestic policy, and it's very much on our minds. So I'm not going to try to discourage the current panel from reflecting. And, of course, with Jane it's very persona.

But we also want to make sure in the follow on discussion that we turn to the future and to the question of America's foreign policy in regard to the broader Islamic world, stretching from Morocco and Nigeria and Kenya all the way through the Middle East and South Asia and Indonesia and the Philippines, more than a billion and a half people in all. But we also want to think about America's global role going forward. And we've heard John Allen and others reflect on how 9/11 took away our focus on some other key parts of the world, at least for the first decade of the post-9/11 experience. So this panel is going to try to pick up that conversation with some ideas going forward.

But, first, Jane, again with condolences, but also admiration and gratitude for your service, for that of your husband, and we look forward to your reflections as we near tomorrow's 20-year anniversary of 9/11.

Over to you please, my friend.

MS. HORTON: Yes, sir. Thank you so much for having me on today. It's such an honor to be here, especially with such a distinguished group of guests. So thank you very much.

9-11 is deeply personal to me, as it is to most Americans. I was in high school when the Twin Towers fell. And I remember running to the TVs with my fellow students and classmates and we were just in shock, in disbelief, and horrified at what we saw. And I remember that night we were at an event where it was kind of at a family fun park and I remember saying to my classmates, you know, our generation is going to war. This is never going to be the same again.

And little did I know, several years later I would meet a soldier myself, an Army sniper — his name was Christopher Horton. And so we got married. He was excited to go on his first deployment to use his skills to serve his country and he was killed in Afghanistan three months on his first deployment.

But the ironic thing is the day that we got his body back from Dover Air Force Base was actually the 10th anniversary of 9/11, which made things — you know, made — there was a lot going on in my head at that time, and so with the 20th anniversary coming up and everything on, it's incredibly deeply personal. And so that's my experience with 9/11, sir.

MR. O'HANLON: Jane, you leave me speechless. So let me just please just keep moving right on. And Will Hurd also has some very personal experience and reflections I'm sure.

So, Congressman, over to you please.

MR. HURD: Thanks. And, Jane, thanks for sharing that story and thanks for what you do for all the families that have been impacted over these last 20 years. It's hard to imagine — you know, this is something that is a wound that never heals. And the work and advocacy you do is changing lives. So thank you for that.

You know, my career in the CIA actually started the day of the USS Cole bombing. I was driving my car from San Antonio to Washington, DC to start at the CIA and the Cole gets attacked in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Yemen. I'm thinking, hey, I'm getting ready to join the CIA, I wonder if I'm going to know anything about what's going on. Fast forward three weeks, I'm the Yemen desk officer, so I'm managing and helping and

providing support to folks in Yemen.

So my career started in the counter-terrorism fight, knowing about al Qaeda. And I remember in August of 2001, in the building in the CIA, the tension, the angst, the concern that something was going to happen. People were sleeping in their cars because they felt like they had to get back to work. And there was this nervousness that something big was about to happen. That feeling is something that it is still scary to think about it today. And when the second plane flew into the World Trade Center, all of us that had been involved in the counter-terrorism fight knew immediately that it was al Qaeda and this was the thing that the building was unable to figure out was going to happen.

If you would have told me on September 12 that it would be another 20 years and you wouldn't have another major attack on our homeland, I would have said you were crazy, right. Because we knew this was going to inspire additional attacks, we knew that this was a real fight on our hands. And the fact that 19 individuals with — 19 terrorists with box cutters killed more Americans in 1 day than 353 imperial Japanese fighters did at Pearl Harbor.

And so this notion that — you know, I — the term "forever war" is offensive to me because to me what people like Jane's husband and the families that she counsels, my colleagues in the CIA and in our diplomatic corps, people like Ryan Crocker, who is one of the best things that the Foreign Service has produced since George C. Marshall, what all of these folks did is they continued to toil for 20 more years as if it was September 12. You know, people say, oh, we spent too much money. I disagree. Because the number of attacks that we prevented from happening on our homeland was many.

You know, when I was in the agency, I used to tell people if most Americans knew the danger that we face every single day, folks wouldn't come out of their homes, right. But these men and women in these services in our entire intelligence community, work to make sure that we stayed safe.

And so to me the last 20 years has actually been a success because we didn't experience and haven't experienced what we experienced 20 years ago tomorrow.

MR. O'HANLON: Will, thank you very, very much.

And now I'd like to go to Farah and then to be followed by Madiha.

MS. PANDITH: I really appreciate the opportunity to start with reflections on what 9/11 means. And I really want to thank both Jane and Will for their really personal accounts.

I was thinking about this question in a very different way, and that is one from someone who is an American and is also a Muslim. I remember looking out from the 41st floor of One Financial Center in Boston on a perfect, perfect fall day at Logan Airport after we began to hear the news that something had happened from Logan. And I remember feeling this terrible knot obviously in my stomach that just didn't go away. And I kept thinking, oh my god, I hope this has nothing to do with Islam because I was a little girl in America when the hostage crisis happened, and I know how Americans reacted to Muslims then. I know how they reacted when there was a fatwa against Salman Rushdie and people thought of Muslims as barbaric and insane. And so I had this in the back of my head as I began to think about, you know, what would happen if in fact these terrorists were in fact claiming to be Muslims.

So for me obviously the last 20 years every single day I have worked on this issue around these things, but there was a devastation that happened beyond the tragic loss of almost 3,000 lives from 93 countries. The other loss was America and the ability to think of ourselves as both being able to push out this idea that we are a country that values everyone. There are such fissures in our society now because of the "us versus them" ideologies. And all of this for me is connected to the 9/11 events. And so it is an — it's a horrifying reality to think that two decades after this has happened, we have still not figured out that component of repair.

MR. O'HANLON: Farah, thank you as well. But I'm going to take the prerogative of quickly following up with you before I go to Madiha because I want to make sure that I'm hearing you right and understanding your point correctly.

What I'm most curious about is do you feel as a Muslim that it's become

harder for Muslims in America to get along or to be appreciated by and to be respected by other Americans? Or were your points more about political polarization and other forms of polarization that are, you know, beyond the specific question of Muslims in America?

MS. PANDITH: Well, I think it's — the data is very clear in terms of the rise of "us versus them" ideologies, both political and religious and heritage-wise. That's just a data point that we all are watching and we all understand.

I am not going to speak for the 1 percent of our country that is Muslim, because it is extremely diverse. But I can speak for myself and I know what it was like to live in America in the Boston area growing up as Muslim when no one cared. No one asked me any questions. And I know what it is like today when even to this day and even in the work that I've done in serving our Nation, people ask me how I was allowed to work at the White House if I wasn't an American. And that kind of thing is happening to this day, Mike.

So, for me, I know the changes that have happened, and I think a lot about the ripple effects of Bin Laden's horrific plan. It was not just the devastation on that day in the physical loss of human loss and the families that are dealing with this to this day, but it is also in — and I know we will talk more about this — but it is also in the way in which the world was reshaped as we think about the other.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you very much.

Madiha, again, with your background in Pakistan, I can't remember if that's where you were on 9/11. I'm sure you'll inform us. So, please, the floor is yours.

MS. AFZEL: Great. Thanks, Mike. And thanks to Jane, Will, and Farah for your reflections.

I was in Pakistan. I was in college in Lahore on September 11, 2001. At that point it was the evening, I was at home with my parents and we started watching the television in shock and horror initially at just the human tragedy that was unfolding before our eyes. And then once we understood what was happening, sort of just horror at the scale of the terrorist attacks.

I mean little did I understand then how significant that part of the world

would be in terms of what happened that day and what came afterward, that a war would begin next door in Afghanistan or that the role that Pakistan would play in that war, that Osama bin Laden would be found in Pakistan 10 years later, that Pakistan itself would become the target of vicious terrorism. You know, none of that was obviously clear to us that day.

But I moved to the U.S. less than a year later when I came to Yale for graduate school in August 2002. And I had lived here before, I went to elementary school in Boston, I went to high school in Canada and visited Boston often then. For me the transition in 2002 was very smooth. But for my male friends and classmates from Pakistan, you know young men my age, they had to go through months and months of security checks, clearance, registrations. For many it delayed their graduate education, for some it changed their plans altogether. They never ended up coming to the U.S.

For me it also changed the path of what I wanted to study. You know, I became an economist as I had planned. I did my Ph.D. in economics, but I really just wanted to understand, you know, what the roots of terrorism and extremism were in that region and what would lead people to sort of commit these acts, to believe in this ideology. And that really became my professional focus. And given Pakistan's complicated relationship with America, it's a complicated thing to be Pakistani-American and it's also a problematic relationship to study as a scholar. And that's what I focus on now. And so it's a really — it's a difficult, challenging, and yet really important space to be in. And so there is nothing else I'd rather study.

And just one last thing in terms of sort of personal reflection. You know, personally, when I look at the Taliban being in control of Afghanistan now, in control of Kabul 20 years after the U.S. war in Afghanistan began and the U.S. defeated the Taliban at that point in 2001, I think of young women and girls and I think of how uncertain their futures are in Afghanistan. And I think of the immense opportunities I had in growing up in a country, mostly in Pakistan, that was Afghanistan's neighbor, and I think of Pakistan's problematic role of course in Afghanistan and ow the fact that we in the U.S. have left Afghan women

and girls ultimately in the hands of the Taliban. And I find that heartbreaking.

So it's been a heartbreaking summer, and in particular the last month.

MR. O'HANLON: Madiha, thank you. Thank you, everyone.

Now, what I'd like to do is turn more to the policy agenda, although we've already been interlinking that to the personal reflections and people should certainly feel free, especially with your four fascinating and important histories, to keep adding insights from your own personal past and personal reflections. But our panel has a big agenda and about 30 minutes left. And one task is to assess the broader state of the Islamic world, not just the Arab Middle East, but also of course South Asia, where we have a lot of expertise on the panel, and over into Africa and even, if you want, over to Southeast Asia. Again, this is a broader region that's not had any official definition, except perhaps through the organization of the Islamic Conference. But it's dozens of countries, it's multiple time zones, it's several continents. And, of course, there are other parts of the world, like our own country, where we have many Muslims and certainly celebrate their representation in our society.

So what's the state of any part of the Islamic world that you want to look at? And Dan Byman in the previous panel and others already talked about how clearly things have been tough, especially in the Arab world, since 9/11. but I think we have probably more to say about the broader Islamic world globally.

And then, of course, U.S. policy towards this part of the world, how should it change, how well has it done, what's the path forward?

And then, of course, how have our institutions changed. And we heard a lot of talk about homeland security and the law and surveillance and counterterrorism in the previous panel and in what you've all said today, especially Will Hurd in his opening. But anything more you want to comment on the state of the Armed Forces and how well they are holding up after such sacrifice. We also heard Rashawn Ray on the previous panel and Jane on this one talk about sacrifice within their families and how a fairly small number of Americans, fewer than a million total, who have served abroad in this period — been deployed abroad to the Middle East over the 20 years, how that small group has done so

much and been asked to do so much.

So any reflections on the state of our national security and foreign policy and homeland security institutions.

And then, finally, globally, how do we chart a path going forward as we try to gradually have the broader Middle East and the counter-terrorism agenda be a little less central in our foreign policy. And we've been trying to do that for a decade, with some success I would argue. But what's the next step.

So I'm not asking everyone to respond to every part of that foreign policy agenda. Please pick and choose as you wish. And we'll start with Madiha.

MS. AFZEL: Thanks, Mike.

If I can, I'm going to start just reflecting on the withdrawal from Afghanistan a little bit more and sort of what that means for U.S. credibility in the region, as I see it, the effects on the region, and then sort of a little bit about the terrorist landscape in south Asia, and then also a little bit about extremism as I see it and what we can do to counter it.

So I'll try to be very brief.

So, you know, the manner of the withdrawal from Afghanistan I think over the summer, and in particular thinking about sort of how the cities of Afghanistan sort of really fell like dominoes to the Taliban. I mean the scenes that we saw in August, the scenes at the airport with Afghans running, you know, on the runway behind U.S. Air Force planes, hanging onto them, trying to escape, falling to their deaths. Then, you know, the scenes outside the airport as many tried to leave the country. I mean I think this has really hurt U.S. credibility and standing in the region, and perhaps irrevocably.

There were narratives of abandonment in the region that were fueled in the 1990s, post-U.S. involvement in the Soviet-Afghan War. And those have resurfaced once again, but they're worse this time give the overt U.S. role in Afghanistan obviously in the last 20 years as opposed to the covert role in the 1980s.

And I think to leave the country, to leave Afghanistan with the very group in charge that we had sought to defeat is obviously deeply problematic, deeply disappointing.

To me, you know — this is perhaps not the panel to get into this — I think there was a lack of — you know, maybe a broader discussion on Afghanistan would be the place. And I have written about this quite a bit. I think there was a lack of strategic patience at play. This decision to withdraw quickly was one that became politicized. And I think it led to this outcome the way it unfolded, this way in the summer of 2021. It didn't have to be this way. You know, it was not inevitable. Those scenes at the airport were not inevitable.

And, you know, there is a loss that we have experienced as a country. I think we need a national reckoning here in the U.S. with that rather than sort of this insistent narrative that's been coming through from the Biden Administration that we went in for counter-terrorism, to defeat al Qaeda, not to nation build. And we accomplished that goal.

I think the reality is that when we defeated the Taliban in 2001, we had to nation build. I mean in some sense there was no choice. And I think we should — you know, the U.S. homeland is certainly safer. And that's going to be sort of where my comments about terrorism also start. But the gains that we made for Afghans are certainly under threat. You know, Afghan civil society is stronger, but so many have left. Women are protesting on the streets, but the Taliban is quashing those protests.

More broadly, I think we are leaving an opening for rivals, Russia, China, in the region, you know, in terms of who might recognize the Taliban first. I think there is an array of contenders who don't necessarily care about the Taliban having an inclusive government. And those are China, Russia, Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, Qatar. And so I worry about the U.S. standing and role in the region.

If I can briefly talk a little bit about the terrorist landscape in South Asia. As I said, the homeland is undeniably safer. But I think the region's future — South Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, more broadly, looking at India as well, is far from uncertain in terms of the terrorist threat. I worry about the terrorist and extremist landscape in Pakistan and Afghanistan most directly. And that ultimately may affect the U.S. in the medium and longer-term as well.

In Pakistan, you know, just to give you sort of a brief sense of the terrorist

groups that exist and are resurgent, there is the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, which attacks the Pakistani state, it is closely linked to the Afghan Taliban, it maintains ties with the group. There are other groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Jaish-e-Mohammed, that target India for the purpose of the Kashmiri Jihad. There are sectarian groups Shia, sectarian groups Sunni, al Qaeda exists in the region, maintain ties with the Taliban, as we know. ISIS K or, you know, the Islamic State Khorasan, which recruit from disaffected Afghan and Pakistani Taliban and whose attack we saw in August outside Kabul Airport. You know, they've undertaken that kind of high casualty horrific attack before, both in Afghanistan and in Pakistan. And they'll do so again. And they may find an even more fertile recruiting ground in disaffected Taliban given that the Taliban is in a very different position now. They are in opposition to the Taliban and may actually find that the Taliban begin in power gives them more recruits.

For the TTP, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, and ISIS K, hundreds of their terrorists have been released from jails across Afghanistan as the Taliban took over the country over the last couple of months. And all these groups are going to find spaces in a Taliban ruled Afghanistan to regroup and to resurge.

And if there is one thing I think that the last 20 years have taught us is that allowing even one of these groups or some of these groups to exist while targeting others means that even the ones that we targeted will resurge. Because the way these groups work is that their foot soldiers cross over, their ideologies overlap. They're going to find recruits. And that worries me. And there are a whole host of issues with over-the-horizon counterterrorism, with our U.S. sort of kind of intelligence collection now in Afghanistan given the fact that we don't have a presence there. Cooperation with Pakistan and how problematic that might be in terms of counter-terrorism cooperation, that I'm happy to go into later.

My last point is just on countering extremism. I mean connected to all of this is the problem of countering extremism. You know, countering terrorist groups is only one part of the equation, and globally, while we've done a good job, you know, in

counterterrorism we have not focused at all really on countering extremism ideologically. And our approach when we have done it has been piecemeal and misguided. This means that these terrorist groups are always going to find an ecosystem from which to recruit people, people who will support their views, who will provide logistical and financial support to them. And what fosters extremism really varies across context, often has national roots, but what underlies it is usually an intolerant, biased, exclusionary view of the world, as my research has found. And if you don't have critical thinking, those kinds of views basically mean that when citizens are faced with extremist propaganda that will buy that propaganda. And that's what happens in environments like Afghanistan, Pakistan, also in Nigeria.

So what's important is we need to teach critical thinking, sort of a more tolerant view of the world, and we haven't done that. And this can be done through education systems, through curricula, even through the media. And this is something where we can focus, I think. We should have focused on this for the last 20 years, but the U.S. can focus on this going ahead and play a leading role in this. But I worry that the will isn't there to do so.

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Thank you very much.

And that's a very good segue I think to Farah, because I know that in some of your work you are certainly well aware of this challenge and tried against the odds to at least make small headway in dealing with the problem of extremism globally. So maybe that's a good place that you can start, but any other comments you'd like to offer on foreign policy going forward please.

MS. PANDITH: So thank you very much.

I want to tell your listeners that if they did not listen to the first panel with General Allen and Ambassador Crocker, they were missing out on I think one of the most exceptional conversations around 9/11. In it both of them obviously said some very powerful things, but among them both General Allen and Ambassador Crocker talked about the environment in which we conduct all of the warfare that we do and understanding culture and understanding trends that mostly, as foreign policy people, we aren't always inserting

into the analysis of what's going on.

So I want to start there because in the 20 years since 9/11 you will all remember that we embarked on what we called the war of ideas, which is to puncture the narrative that al Qaeda put out that the West was at war with Islam, which has taken on a global significance for a lot of different reasons. And we learned the impact of that narrative, the staying power that that narrative has, both with what happened with al Qaeda and what continues to happen with the Taliban, but importantly what happened with the so called Islamic State where we saw foreign fighters come in from countries all over the world that were not even on our radar screen. The U.S. government was shocked to find that people from Trinidad and Tobago were coming over to fight in the so-called Caliphate. If we had been paying attention to the impact of ideology and how people navigate through identity and belonging, we would not have been surprised.

For me, as I look at 20 years of this war effort, the thing that breaks me is that we did not put our money where our mouth was on the ideological component of the war. We spent dollars to the billions and trillions on the hard power component when in fact what we should be doing is scaling up cultural intelligence, understanding what's happening within communities. And let's take a moment and think about the scope of what this is. One-fourth of the planet is Muslim. The majority of that number is under the age of 30, digital natives who are connected with a swish of their finger to ideas and memes and videos and a whole host of other things that they feel connect with them around identity and belonging. General Allen talked about culture, he talked about the importance. It is a tool in our toolbox that we have not used.

To be able to understand what's happening within these societies, in these communities, they offer us the signals for how to prevent the appeal of the ideology going forward. What we have to be doing as we think about, in a very sobering way, what went well and what didn't go well. We also need to think about what's coming. And for me, as I think about this on a global level, this isn't — and this is where I'm going to push back slightly to you, Mike — you know, this concept of the Muslim world, what are we talking

about? We are talking about Muslim communities around the world that are really vibrant, extremely diverse, and connected. So what is happening in Nouakchott Mauritania connects to what is happening in Montreal, connects to what is happening in the Tri-Border area in South America. People haven't put those dots together as we conduct policy.

So that's the first general point.

The second is there has been deep change in the way in which our world is activated around emotion and psychology. Dr. Ray talked about in panel one this concept of, you know, sort of feelings and emotions and what people absorb. When you talk about those kind s of things with policy makers their eyes glaze over. Nobody wants to hear about how people feel about their identity, no one wants to think about belonging. But, in fact, those are the sparks that begin the journey for people, whether you are a white supremacist or you're somebody who's interested in the so-called Islamic State. Something is happening within you in which you are thinking about who you are and where you belong. So the trends that have changed around what justice means, who we trust, what's important, are actually assets for foreign policy makers to think about as we determine what's coming and what the future is going to be.

So for me, as I think about these global questions about emotion, about identity, and about how the bad guys are now going to be thinking about recruitment, I think about all of those things and I think also, Mike, about the joining of ideologies. We now have a situation where it is much bigger than the region around Afghanistan, I'm sorry to say. It is connected to what's happening in Europe, what's happening in Africa, what is happening in our own country around how we think about ourselves and how we belong. And that kind of ideology pool is moving both the Neo Nazis in a direction and it's moving people that are using Islam to recruit in a direction, and now we have a more destabilized environment in which to think about security.

So for me, if I were to think about one big thing the U.S. government can be doing as we think in a forward leaning posture, it is to put our money into cultural intelligence, to think differently about the environment landscape, and to go all in on soft

power right now so that we can prevent and we can see what's going to be happening and not be surprised by it.

MR. O'HANLON: Farah, thank you very, very much for a great overview of many different parts of a universe that admittedly is not one world and requires many different forms of sophistication and knowledge on our part to deal with effectively.

Congressman Hurd, over to you, my friend, and looking forward to your insights as to where U.S. foreign policy needs to go from here at whatever level what you would like to address that topic.

MR. HURD: Sure. Well, my first insight is we need to put these three amazing women in charge, and we'll solve some of these problems. That will be the first point.

But I agree with what all my fellow panelists are saying. And let me step back and — there are some realities we have to accept. The global war on terrorism was a war against an ideology, right. The ideology was a specific, very narrow, small part of Islamic extremism. And dealing with this, it's like dealing with influenza — it's not going to go away. You might be able to inoculate communities against it, but it's there. So this is something that we're always going to be dealing with. I think policy makers have to make a better argument to the American public about why foreign policies matter and why it connects to their daily life.

And earlier, Michael, you asked the broader Middle East and our relationships there and what's wrong. Why did this matter? Because the governments in the Middle East in the '90s were seen as oppressive to their people that were there and those people viewed us, the United State of America, as supporting those regimes. And so this is where this notion of the near enemy versus the far enemy — Sayyid Qutb, who was kind of — his philosophical underpinnings influenced Osama bin Laden, talked about the boot that is on our neck is our governments in these countries, but it's supported by the United States. A lot of this pent-up issues and feelings is what led ultimately to the Arab Spring.

So all of these things are ultimately connected. And what America needs to realize is why does this matter to us. And I would say that America became an exceptional Nation, not because of what we have taken but because of what we have given. Not only support to different countries, but an idea. When you go — in Pakistan in the '80s and the '90s you would have these things called American centers. These were places that someone could walk up to and, you know, see and enjoy and interact with American culture. After 9/11 our facilities in these countries were the largest and most locked down places in the entire country and it signified to the population that we are afraid of you, right. And this was part of the problem that we have had since ultimately going in the invasion of Afghanistan.

And I will agree with Farah, our soft power is more important than our hard power. Ambassador Crocker, when I got to serve under him, he would always say if you had more pumps and wingtips on the ground it prevents boots on the ground, meaning better diplomacy, better intelligence officers, better folks supporting foreign aid, you're going to prevent having to use the most expensive tool in our tool kit, the U.S. military.

And so we have to take these things into account and we have to start pushing decision making on foreign policy to our folks on the ground because they have the best understanding of what's happening there. Since probably Bill Clinton, and maybe before that — and this is not a criticism of Bill Clinton because every other president has done it since him — they have focused foreign policy making within the White House. And the power that our ambassadors and folks on the ground — has been diminished to somebody at the National Security Council who may live next door to somebody who may have been a senior policy person in that government in the '80s, right. And that's not an exaggeration. I can give a specific example where that has happened.

And so our foreign policy decision making, we need to be relying on the people on the ground because these things are complicated, these things are difficult.

And, Michael, just to end, the two countries that to me in the Middle East that when I started my career in October of 2000 in the national security apparatus to now,

that has been the most shocking is Pakistan and Turkey. We thought — you know, I think one of the mistakes after 9/11 is not working close enough with the Pakistani government in order to change their ways and their support ultimately of the Taliban. There was a small opportunity in order to do that. They could have been an important ally. More Pakistani — the number of Pakistani boys and men that died in the global war on terrorism and in order to protect the entire world was significantly high. And sometimes we forget that. And then Turkey, we thought that was going to be a stabilizing country in the region and it hasn't, it's gone the opposite way.

And I said I was going to end, but I'm going to end on this. The thing that scares me is when you talk to our friendly Arab Sunni diplomats about the U.S. role in the region, they all say don't make us make a decision, don't make us make a choice. And they're talking about don't make us make a choice between the United States of America and China, because China has a role. And to me we have to look at all of these things through that geopolitical lens of this great power competition between the United States and China, because this is going to affect America's role in the rest of the region. And I would never have thought that 20 years after 9/11 that China could be potentially surpassing the United States of America as the most influential in that region.

MR. O'HANLON: A quick follow up, Will, before I go to Jane on that point. And it touches on something, of course, that Madiha spoke to as well, because she was talking about the region and how it will view American credibility.

Just to bring it home, how much should we care? I mean I was in meetings — I had the privilege to be in meetings with President Karzai 10 years ago which were fascinating to watch his mindset. And I think he's got a lot of abilities, but he was also of course a frustrating interlocutor ultimately for the United States in many ways. But one part of his world view as that we must really value our presence in Afghanistan. And I was more of an observer than a participant in these conversations, so I bit my tongue, but I really wanted to say, you know, President Karzai, if we could have a safe Afghanistan with respect to human rights at a modest level, we'd be happy to leave. And, frankly, I'd be happy to see

China be influential there today if they — you know, good luck. Good luck extracting those minerals.

I mean I've been to Afghanistan a lot and I love the Afghan people, but, you know — and I would have preferred to stay and I think President Biden was wrong to pull us out and Madiha and I wrote about that — but still I don't see great opportunity for the Chinese in Afghanistan. Pakistan may be a little different. The Chinese seem to be, you know, cutting off their own nose to spite their face with India, so I don't know that we have to worry too much about the Chinese and Indians getting close.

How much should we really care about our geostrategic position in South Asia? You know, I mean I think there are a lot of reasons to worry about the pull out, but I'm not sure that's one of them. What do you think?

MR. HURD: Well, look, so, you know, I — Dallas Morning News asked me to write a piece on the pull out and I wrote something a couple of days ago. You can probably find on my website, WillBHurd.com. I go into some of these things, like why I thought this was a terrible decision. Why are we talking about a pulling out? A presence of 3,500 people on the ground, right, was a small footprint that allowed the Afghan army — in order to fight and hold the line. The beginning of the end was when the previous administration, the Trump Administration, negotiated with the Taliban without the Afghan government in the area. And then when the Taliban realized that Joe Biden was going to continue the same policies as Donald Trump, then every — all the Afghan, you know, folks that weren't getting paid, the army folks that weren't getting paid that were in the south, they're saying why am I going to fight if the most influential entity in this country, America, is basically picking the Taliban. That's what started this ultimate problem of where we go now. Why should it matter? Guess what — if there is more free countries it's better off for America. If you have countries that American can exchange goods and services with, that's good for America, that's good for all of our 401Ks when we get old and are living off that, it helps us keep prices low, right. These are some very basic things.

We always talk about those rare earth minerals. I'd rather buy it from a

friend like Afghanistan than have to buy 98 percent of it from China. And so it matters. Oh, and by the way, if we believe, right, that freedom and opportunity and being able to move up the economic ladder is good for us, we should walk the walk. And the fact that half the population of Afghanistan was not allowed to go to school, right, you know, the fact that the Taliban just said girls aren't going to be able to play sports. That's the first thing they say. Guess what the next thing is going to be? They're not going to be able to go to school. And the number of girls, in the millions, that have now been in school, that are going to help reform that country — you know, Afghanistan has evolved far, it has a long way to go. But it started basically in the fourth century. And so now we have what it is because we helped export that.

So it matters to us because this is saying the way of life that we believe in, that should — you know, is going to — if it increases more in the rest of the world, it's going to be more beneficial for humanity and be able to uplift humanity. That's why we should care.

MR. O'HANLON: Very powerful. Glad I followed up. And I tend to agree, but more importantly, the way you put it was a very good way to have our penultimate presentation for today.

And now, Jane, I think there could be no more appropriate way to finish than with your reflections. And I know I put the whole foreign policy agenda before the panel. You may or may not want to go there, but I certainly would like your reflections on the state of the military, on veterans, on military families, on what more you think we can and should do to help those who have sacrificed so much and across, you know, other parts of government where people have served as well. But I know you have a lot of insights and experience there.

So the floor is yours for the final word.

And to the audience I should say, I've been weaving in your questions and the panelists have been addressing some of them. I apologize we're not going to work through them specifically, but I can't think of, again, a better way to finish today's

proceedings than with a word from Jane Horton.

Over to you.

MS. HORTON: Thank you, sir.

No, this has been an incredibly insightful conversation. And I personally tried to keep my personal feelings versus foreign policy versus what's going on separate. And I've been thinking about it this whole time, but I don't think now is the time for that. I think my personal feelings and what I've been through and what my husband sacrificed is the state of the force right now. And as we go back to 9/11 and we look at the lessons and legacies, I think there's a lot to say there. But after 9/11 happened, it was one of the most unified times our country has ever had. And I know we're all together on that.

But we also had our best and our brightest and our bravest men and women volunteer during all-volunteer force to be willing to fight, bleed, and die for us. And they didn't even ask questions, they didn't have to know the why. And as we're all sitting here debating the why were we there after we killed Bin Laden, you know most of our husbands were killed after that. A lot of my friends that I know that I've been with, we all lost people after that.

So bringing that up and bring it back into the foreign policy piece as well, if we want to be able to continue to recruit our best and our brightest, people have to know why they're fighting. And it can't all just blow up in their faces after 20 years of multiple deployments. You know, we see all these videos of parents with their children at baseball games throwing the first pitch and how excited the kids are to see them, and that's not always the case. You know, a lot of people have really disjointed families. They've had a lot of issues because mom has been gone for 16th birthday, why does mom have to go to Afghanistan again, what is this place. You know, and there's also all of these differing views about is this like Vietnam. And the way I look at it is what is my husband's legacy, what is he going to be tied to for giving the most selfless thing someone can do — giving his life.

And so we have go to do better if we're going to take an all-volunteer force, even if it wasn't all volunteer, and we're going to continue down these paths. We've got to

do better. Because we're going to have problems recruiting. You know, there's a lot of questions right now with service members on the why, what's going on, what happened, why did my husband die. I've been asked that probably 10,000 times, which is an exaggeration, but I've been asked that a lot the past couple of weeks. And, to be honest, it's a question that I feel like the country has to ask themselves. And we need to be asking ourselves why did we do this, how can we be better, what was the purpose, and just reflect on it as a nation.

And so I sit in a very unique position, not only just losing my husband, but I've also worked as a senior advisor to the Afghan government. I went over as a special assistant with General Dunford in 2016. I was over there for Christmas with the acting secretary of defense and, honestly, just went over on my own two months ago in June to Afghanistan. Met with President Ghani. I wanted to know what is going on on the ground.

For me, after losing my husband and with all the questions on the why, it was very healing for me to get to know the women, the Afghan girls' robotics team. All these wonderful, you know, women in government that are doing these incredible things, journalists, and just the way they would — and the continue to talk to me and tell me, you know, this is — I am the sum of your husband's sacrifice. This is what your husband did for our country. And to be on the phone with people all night long, you know, trying to get out of the country and they're like, Miss Jane, we're going to be okay because the Americans are coming back to help us, to tell them we're not coming back to help you is pretty horrific.

So as we talk about lessons and legacies, these are all things that we have to talk about, and we have to have a real conversation with ourselves about the state of the force and the institutions. I have yet to meet someone that can really tell me what happens after the knock at the door. You know, what is the process with these 13 new families, what are they going to be facing in the next year to 2 years. Are these processes smooth for them is the question we need to be asking ourselves. Is the VA process working for service members?

So, yeah, so there's all different kinds of interwoven things with the state of the force and also our credibility as a nation. If we're going to lead the world, if we're going to lead and if we're going to tell people, you know, come work with America, we're here for you. You know, we are the land of the free because of the brave, the land of promise. We have to keep our word on that. We are better than that as people.

And so we have to look back and reflect and see how we can do better, what we can do as a country to learn, and also to also paint legacies appropriately from those who have fought, bled, and died. They deserve better than, you know, is this another Vietnam or already declaring that we lost. And maybe that is the case. And this is the first time I'm going to say this, but I can stomach that only if we learn for the future. That's the only way that I can stomach that.

My last comment is it's an honor to be on this panel with all of you. I also think that we have a lot to learn from our Muslim communities and they are our greatest resource. And as we have all these beautiful Afghan people coming over to America, let's learn from them and let's work with them on the future of Afghanistan as we go forward.

So I look forward to that. I have some friends coming over that are really, really excited to get to America. And I also hope we as a country don't forget how brutal the Taliban is. You know, two years ago when I was there, they just shot up a maternity ward and killed women and children and babies. You know, this is a brutal regime.

Yes, so I'm going to stop there.

MR. O'HANLON: Well, it's powerful.

And let me just say in closing, thank you. And let me add that even if in some sense our mission in Afghanistan was a military defeat in some specific sense — and I do believe that — I also think it was not a strategic defeat. I think your husband and many others gave a lot in not just — and should be proud and you should be proud and we should be grateful — not only because they did what they were asked, but because as the previous panel underscored as well, we have had a safe homeland for 20 years largely because of these efforts. And also even if the Taliban ultimately in some military sense won, they know

that we fought them for 20 years and we'll go back if we have to. If their behavior become egregious, and it could. I think all of you are right to underscore that — or several of you underscored that. There is a pretty powerful message we've sent, which is different than the America of the 1990s where we were quite averse to taking risks on the battlefield. And I think people see now that we're willing to do what's needed.

So I think the Taliban is going to be pretty heavily discouraged from active collaboration with any of the groups that Madiha mentioned earlier. We've got to keep our eye on them, but I think we have done a lot, your husband did a lot to send a message this country is prepared to do what it takes to defend itself.

So I had the privilege of writing an article along these lines with Amy McGrath, one of our Nation's first Marine Corps aviators to fly in combat as a woman. And we made these points and I just want to underscore not just the gratitude, which is profound, but the conviction that at a strategic level the contribution has been enormous, even if we now have to figure out a new strategy for the next 20 years, at least in regard to Afghanistan where we pulled up stakes.

So I'm sorry for that little (inaudible), but I couldn't help but want to express my own personal feelings and gratitude, especially to you, Jane, and all the families like yours.

And I want to thank the whole panel, the whole Brookings enterprise, and especially those of you who tuned in today to join us. Bless you all and your families on this momentous commemoration. And, again, with thanks and gratitude to all who have done so much.

So signing off from Brookings.

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